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Comment on Soviet Press Statements

on Civil Defense

ORR Project S-63

16 April 1956

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Recent press reports from Moscow have included reviews of articles found in the Sovetsky Patriot, a newspaper of the Voluntary Association for Cooperation with the Army Air Force and Navy--VOSSAF. This newspaper commenced publication on 1 April 1956. The first issues insist that defense against atomic attack must become the "urgent concern" of every member of VOSSAF.

Marshall Semyon Budenny in an article written for Sovetsky Patriot, declared that the problem of defense of the homeland had "grown immeasurably." He added that questions of training in chemical and atomic defense now directly concern every Soviet citizen. Marshall Budenny also conceded that the government program to disperse industry was dictated in part by defense considerations.

Other recent articles have called for widespread organization of civil defense groups and the enlistment of many more women as specialists in atomic and chemical defense, and communications. 1/

In the past, civil defense in the USSR has generally stressed the use of air raid shelter in dwellings and places of work, the use of existing facilities and organizations for civil defense, and wide-spread training of civilians in first aid, and air and chemical defense. 2/ Such preparations seemed to have been aimed more at defense against weapons of the type used in World War II than against present-day nuclear weapons.

Last fall, TASS stated that the Soviet H-bomb test included "wide-scale research ... on questions of protecting human beings." Zhukov's XXth Congress speech in February called for increased emphasis on civil defense in the USSR. 3/ Even before this, the commander of the Kiev Military District stressed specifically that more attention should be paid by the Communist Party to civil defense work. He said that assistance should be given civil defense units in reorganizing their activities in

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accordance with "present-day requirements." 1/

It is probable that a decision was reached some time last year to reorganize the civil defense system of the USSR, to adapt it to the threat of nuclear warfare, and to expand the already extensive training program.

A limited amount of information on atomic weapons was disseminated to the Soviet public during 1954 and 1955. 2/ So far as is known the scope of information was limited to knowledge about the nuclear weapons which were used in Japan during World War II. Instructor training for defense against atomic and biological weapons was indicated in the USSR monthly Voyenniye Znaniya in June 1955. 3/ The preparation of reserve-level instructors is probably now under way. 4/

The appearance of the new USSR newspaper is another indication of the USSR's continually increasing concern about civil defense. The dispersal of Soviet industry for defense purposes has long been suspected. 5/

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Civil defense has not been publicized as extensively since World War II. 2/ Therefore, the appearance of the new newspaper and the unusual use of leaders such as Zhukov and Budenny to press for improved civil defense seems to indicate that any supposed easing of international tension will not be permitted to weaken defense attitudes of the Soviet bloc.

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